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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PBTS](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY MINISTER FASSI FIHRI MEETS WITH AMBASSADOR
ZALMAY KHALILZAD

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas T. Riley, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: On August 3, Taieb Fassi Fihri, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), met with Ambassador Riley and the US Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, for a courtesy call. Ambassador Khalilzad was in Morocco for other meetings with UAE officials. The conversation also touched on the current situation in Lebanon, Syria and Iran. Mohammed Azeroual, Director General of Multilateral Relations and Global Cooperation, attended the meeting along with Poloff (note taker). Ambassador Khalilzad briefed Fassi Fihri on the current situation in Iraq, emphasizing the US commitment to maintaining Iraq's borders and solving the sectarian disputes. Ambassador Khalilzad requested the GOM's support with the Arab League for building a credible Iraqi state. He assured Fassi Fihri that stabilizing and enhancing the political structures in Iraq is of primary importance. Fassi Fihri stated that the GOM supports the US in Iraq, but thinks that the current situation in Lebanon may be exacerbating the situation. He suggested that an immediate cease-fire is necessary and the Israel/Palestinian problem must be solved. End Summary.

Fassi Fihri Discusses Morocco

12. (C) Deputy Minister of the MFA, Taieb Fassi Fihri, met with Ambassador Riley and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad on August 3. Fassi Fihri began the meeting by giving an overview of what he termed the "good movement" in Morocco. He identified the upcoming 2007 elections as the best in the Arab and Muslim world because the process is transparent. He noted the existence of the Justice and Development Party (PJD) as an "Islamist" party but did not elaborate on its role in the political process. Fassi Fihri said that progress is being made in developing Morocco's infrastructure and that there are a number of dynamic nongovernmental organizations (NGO). He said that there had been no progress in Morocco's relations with Algeria and that he suspects the problem is a generational difference between the two leaders. He lamented that Algeria will not send officials to Morocco and pointed out that Morocco sends officials to Algeria. The relationship with Mauritania is good, according to Fassi Fihri, and is focused on stability and security issues. He emphasized that the GOM is working on an autonomy proposal for the Western Sahara, which he identified as the "Sahara Issue." Fassi Fihri described the process as dynamic and inclusive, but admitted that including the Polisario is a stumbling block for some. Fassi Fihri called the Maghreb "the rational area of the Arab world."

Ambassador Khalilzad Discusses Iraq

13. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad updated Fassi Fihri on Iraq by saying it is in a difficult transition period. Sunni Arabs initially felt that the change in the regime was at their expense, whereas the Shi'a Arabs and the Kurdish population welcomed the change, according to Ambassador Khalilzad. Progress has been made in integrating Sunni Arabs in the political process. He added that there are two major issues -- internally, the sectarian divisions will allow Al-Qa'ida to take advantage of the situation; and, externally, not all of Iraq's neighbors support the new national unity government. Prime Minister Al-Maliki is strong, according to Ambassador Khalilzad, and he is making efforts to have the various groups reconcile. The next step, he pointed out, is to incorporate the Sunni insurgents and demobilize, disarm and reintegrate militias -- the bulk of which are Shiite.

14. (C) Fassi Fihri asked whether there was space for informal discussions among Iraqi leaders. Ambassador Khalilzad assured him that there is and said that a National Reconciliation Higher Commission exists. He identified the three Iraq problem areas as the enhancement of the security institutions, that political leaders must take responsibility for militia forces under them, and that the insurgency groups, including the Sunni militia, must be reduced.

15. (C) Fassi Fihri questioned whether the US is committed to the unity of Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad assured him that the US is committed at the highest levels of government. Oil and gas belong to all of the Iraqis, according to the

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constitution, said Ambassador Khalilzad. Fassi Fihri asked if the Kurds want to leave Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad said definitely not as they have an autonomous area which is prospering and they receive money from the central government. If the sectarian divide is managed well, the country will thrive, said Ambassador Khalilzad. He also added that the US cannot leave Iraq until Iraqis can stand on their own feet.

Syria and Iran

16. (C) Fassi Fihri asked what Syria's role in the insurgencies and the region is. Ambassador Khalilzad responded that Iran is happy that the Shi'a have the power in Iraq, but is supporting ex-Ba'athists and encouraging attacks on the coalition. Syria is also helping Ba'athist insurgents.

17. (C) From Fassi Fihri's perspective, Bashar al-Asad is incapable of separating Syria from Iran. He said that "we must help him" and that Spain, on behalf of the EU, has been trying to assist. Syria has an opportunity at the present time to have an indirect dialogue with the US to remove Hizballah from Syria and to break its ties with Iran, according to Fassi Fihri. He offered the GOM's assistance in this dialogue.

The Impact of Lebanon

18. (C) Fassi Fihri asked whether or not the current situation in Lebanon will complicate US efforts in Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad responded by saying that the Shi'a are worried. Fassi Fihri wondered if Hassan Nasrallah is becoming a "star." Ambassador Khalilzad said the impact will depend on the outcome of the conflict. There is a risk that Iran might encourage Iraqi Shiite extremists to increase

attacks on the coalition because of Lebanon. Fassi Fihri countered by saying the "people need a star;" they are waiting for the next Salah edh-Din. With Saudi Arabia having a Shi'a population in the east and Bahrain being Shi'a, Fassi Fihri believes Hizballah will have an impact and that Israel has lost its international image because of this war. It is in the next few days, according to Fassi Fihri, when we will know -- the UNSC should require a cease-fire. Ambassador Khalilzad said that he had the strong impression that the US will push for a cease-fire, assist Lebanon with humanitarian aid and engagement in a sustainable peace process.

¶9. (C) Fassi Fihri pointed out that, if the West gives Israel more time, people will think the war is part of a conspiracy against them and that Iran is truly the West's target. He added that the Arab World needs the US to solve the Israel/Palestine problem. He also pointed out that the GOM would support US peace initiatives and will continue to support the US in Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad encouraged Fassi Fihri to assist the Arab League in playing a positive role. Al-Asad must "look to his future," according to Fassi Fihri.

The Kidnapped Moroccans

¶10. (C) Fassi Fihri, when discussing the militia groups with Ambassador Khalilzad, brought up the two Moroccans who were kidnapped on the road to Jordan in 2005. He pointed out that the GOM had opened its embassy immediately following the war as a gesture of support for rebuilding Iraq. Fassi Fihri believes the two men are dead, even after the GOM worked with religious leaders in an attempt to secure the men's release. Presently, the GOM has only one or two representatives in Baghdad. Ambassador Khalilzad offered US assistance; Fassi Fihri said that Iraq must guarantee Moroccans' security and that it cannot do so. (Note: Fassi Fihri said the Government of Iraq sends a letter to assigned diplomats saying their security cannot be guaranteed. End Note.) The GOM is, however, according to Fassi Fihri, interested in maintaining its relationship with Iraq.

¶11. This cable was cleared by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad.

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